

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1225

INFO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 19290

BRUSSELS FOR US MISSION OECD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEAN, TH

SUBJECT: US-ASEAN CONSULTATIONS

REF: A) JAKARTA 11206 (NOTAL); B) MANILA 12848

1. ASA SARASIN, NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TOLD ECON COUNSELOR DURING BROAD RANGING DISCUSSION SEPTEMBER 12 THAT, AS RESULT NORTH VIETNAMESE SUSPICION OF ASEAN, MEMBER NATIONS ARE FOR TIME BEING TREADING SLOWLY IN REGARD PROPOSED CONSULTATIONS WITH USG. ASA SAID NORTH VIETNAMESE STATED DURING TALKS IN BANGKOK IN MAY THAT ASEAN IS "CREATION OF USG"; NONETHELESS THEY HEARD HIM OUT AS HE VEHEMENTLY DENIED ALLEGATION AND RECOUNTED HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF ASEAN. ASA SAID THAT IN VIEW DRV STANCE, SOME ASEAN
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NATIONS WERE RELUCTANT TO INITIATE PUBLIC DIALOGUE WITH USG

AT THIS TIME.

2. ASA SAID THAT AS SECRETARY GENERAL OF ASEAN HE HAD COUNSELED MEMBER NATIONS TO TAKE STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH TO JOINT CONSULTATIONS WITH NON-MEMBERS, WITH RESULT THAT ASEAN HAD HELD TALKS WITH AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, CANADA, AND EEC DELEGATION, (HE ADDED THAT JOINT ASEAN-EEC STUDY GROUP IS CURRENTLY HARD AT WORK PREPARING FOR SECOND ROUND OF CONSULTATIONS IN MANILA IN JANUARY OR FEBRUARY). IN EACH INSTANCE DISCUSSIONS HAD BEEN PROPOSED TO ASEAN SECRETARIAT BY NON-ASEAN STATE, ASA SAID. HE OPINED QUESTION OF USG-ASEAN CONSULTATIONS WAS MATTER OF TIMING ONLY, AND WAS RELATED TO LARGER POLITICAL QUESTION OF RELATIONSHIP OF ASEAN MEMBERS TO THE U.S. "SUPER POWER". HE THOUGHT THAT CONSULTATIONS MIGHT TAKE PLACE EARLY NEXT YEAR AND USG SHOULD MAINTAIN CLOSE CONTACT WITH STANDING COMMITTEE IN MANILA.

3. COMMENT: ASA, WHO HAS PREVIOUS HISTORY AS CONFIDANTE OF EMBASSY OFFICERS, IS KNOWLEDGEABLE AND PERCEPTIVE, ESPECIALLY ON ASEAN AFFAIRS. IN DISCUSSING USG/DRV EQUATION AS IT RELATES TO ASEAN PROBLEMS, ASA MENTIONED SOME ASEAN MEMBERS "WISH TO INVITE OTHER NATIONS TO JOIN ASEAN". HE DID NOT CLEARLY SAY HE WAS THINKING IN TERMS OF EVENTUAL MEMBERSHIP FOR DRV, BUT IN LIGHT EARLIER COMMENTS THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IS. IT WAS EVIDENT THAT ASA REMAINS WELL DISPOSED TOWARD US, PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY, AND WE BELIEVE THAT, GIVEN HIS ASEAN BACKGROUND PLUS CURRENT MFA RESPONSIBILITIES, HE CAN PLAY HELPFUL ROLE IN USG-ASEAN CONSULTATIONS SHOULD WE WISH TO CALL UPON HIM FOR ASSISTANCE AT ANY TIME.

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